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INFORMATION PAPERS No. 17, January, 1976

Two Studies on

The Palestinians Today and American Policy

Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Northwestern University

Edward Said, Columbia University

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In pursuance of its objective to disseminate accurate and scientific knowledge about the Arab world, its achievements, problems and development, the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, Inc. (Box 7391, North End Station, Detroit, Mich. 48202) thought it in the public interest to publish the essays* which appear in this Information Paper. From time to time, the Association will bring out Information Papers on relevant questions in the hope of providing the public with the necessary information and background for an informed assessment of critical matters that affect Arab American relations. It is the hope of the Association that such information will promote understanding and thereby strengthen good relations between the American and Arab communities.

The Association of Arab-American University Graduates, Inc., was established in December, 1967, incorporated as a non-profit educational and cultural organization in the state of Michigan in 1968 and obtained tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service in 1970. The Association aims at promoting knowledge and understanding of cultural, scientific and educational matters between the Arab and American peoples. Membership is open to all college graduates who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents and who are of Arabic-speaking origin. Associate membership is open to U.S. citizens or permanent residents interested in furthering the aims of the AAUG.

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*Originally presented as testimonies on the Palestine question to the special Sub Committee on Investigations of the Committee on International Relations of the U.S. House of Representatives, September 30, 1975.

Ibrahim Abu-Lughod

THE PALESTINIANS TODAY

When Palestine was dismembered in 1948, Palestine's Arab population numbered 1,398,000.¹ According to the best estimates, that population is now approximately 3,500,000. I say approximately advisedly: it is virtually impossible to obtain an accurate count of today's Palestinian Arab population for the obvious reason that it is a dispersed people under the jurisdiction of different and conflicting political authorities; in view of the absence of a Palestinian national authority vested with and able to exercise the power of conducting a census, no census of the Palestinians is feasible. The problem of counting Palestinians is compounded by the fact that more than 70 percent of them possess the legal nationality of other states: about 53 percent of the Palestinians are nationals of Jordan (probably half of them under Israeli military control), close to 13 percent are citizens of Israel, and about 6 percent possess Lebanese, Kuwaiti, Saudi, Iraqi, or European-American nationalities. Irrespective of the current citizenship status of this population, all of them identify themselves and are frequently identified by others as Palestinians. My present estimate of the Palestinian population today

¹The figures for 1948 are taken from Janet Abu-Lughod, "The Demographic Transformation of Palestine," in I. Abu-Lughod, ed., *The Transformation of Palestine* (Evanston, 1971).

is based on a reasonably accurate accounting of the Palestinians made in 1970 from all available censuses of the various countries in which Palestinians reside.² I have updated the 1970 figures on the basis of an annual increase of 3 percent, or roughly 100,000, per year, which is the rate of increase accepted by demographers. The following map (page 2a) illustrates the geographic distribution of the Palestinian population.

Some Major Characteristics

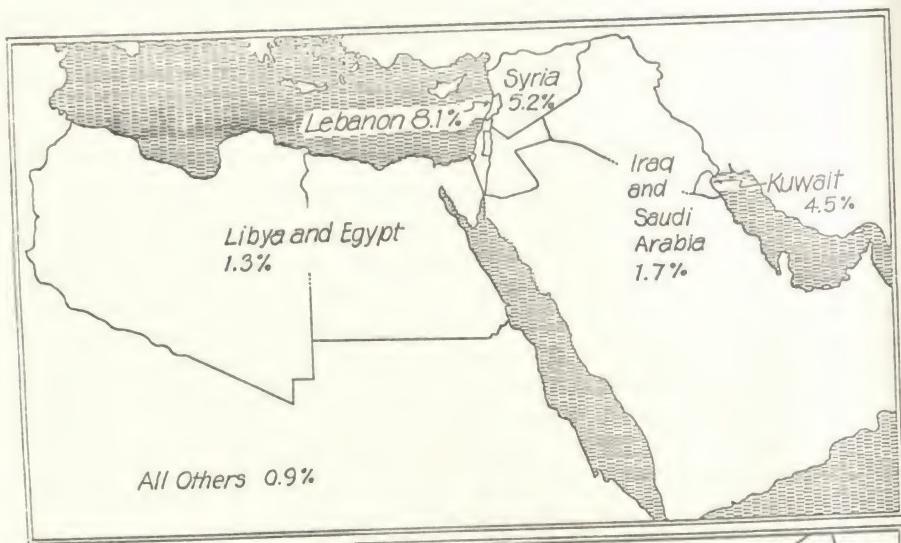
Close to 60 percent of the Palestinian Arab population today are twenty years or less in age; less than 6 percent are over the age of sixty. The majority of the population live in urban or rapidly urbanizing areas. The Palestinians as a whole are highly educated. At present about 20 percent of the total Palestinian population are in school; about 71 percent of those in school are in elementary school, the rest in higher grades. In terms of higher education, approximately 11/1000 of the population is enrolled in a university, a figure reached only in Lebanon in the Arab states (comparable figures for other countries: U.S. 30/1000, Soviet Union 18/1000, France 9/1000, England 8/1000, Egypt 6/1000, Iraq 4/1000).³

Thus the Palestine question today affects and is affected by a national community that is highly cohesive despite its physical and legal fragmentation, highly conscious of its national identity despite serious attempts at national subjugation and assimilation, and highly educated despite the absence of a specific Palestinian national authority to channel the community's educational aspirations. It is urban, young, and modern. The highly assertive role which the Palestinians have played subsequent to their dispersal in 1948 cannot be understood without reference to these qualities and personal attainments. All future attempts at settling the Palestinians' claims to nationhood and the retrieval of their *patrie* will have to take these attainments into consideration if they are to succeed.

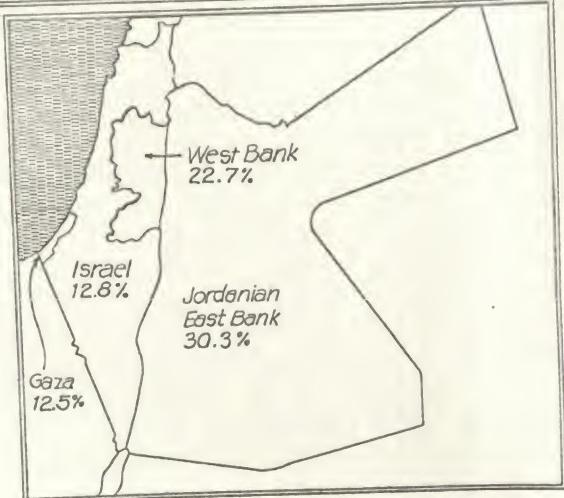
The expulsion of the Palestinian people from those parts of Palestine which subsequently became Israel, the eventual incorporation of central and eastern Palestine into Jordan, and the continued

²The figures for 1970 are taken from Nabil Shaath, "High Level Palestinian Manpower," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. I, No. 2 (1972).

³My "Educating a Community in Exile: The Palestinian Experience," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. II, No. 3 (1973), details the educational achievements and problems of the Palestinian people.



*Distribution
of
Palestinian
Population*



administration of the Gaza Strip by Egypt resulted in certain abnormalities. While Palestine continued to exist in the collective consciousness of its own people and other Arabs, Palestine ceased to exist as a political entity, and the Palestinian people ceased to have any political or juridical institutions that could speak on their behalf and express their will. The leftover organizations from the days of the Mandate regime were no longer accorded the trust that Palestinians had once reposed in them. The severe trauma which characterized Palestinian life after the dismemberment of Palestine and the Palestinians' concern with the need to survive as human beings meant, among other things, that their primary interest in the immediate aftermath of 1948 was economic survival against the many odds confronting them. Much as the Palestinians criticize the international community for condoning the destruction of their homeland and their expulsion from that homeland, and for depriving them of the elementary right of self-determination accorded to most people of the world, and much as they criticize the shortcomings and failures of the Arab states among which they lived, it is reasonable to state that the Palestinians could not have survived physically and morally had it not been for the massive assistance which they received primarily from the Arab states and secondarily from the international community.

The Arab states without exception placed their facilities, underdeveloped as these were in the fifties and sixties, at the disposal of the Palestinians. The Palestinians were able differentially to obtain employment in highly underdeveloped economies and restricted job markets. Some were able to acquire land for cultivation, particularly in Syria, Iraq, and Jordan. Many were admitted to the school systems of these states and availed themselves of other public facilities. In addition, international agencies assisted in the upkeep of the Palestinian refugees, especially those in the refugee camps. The emergence of new states, particularly in the Gulf region, enabled well-trained Palestinian manpower to participate in their growth. It would be difficult to imagine the development of Jordan, the Gulf states, and others without the active participation of the Palestinians. The relatively small Palestinian middle class was able to utilize its initiatives and capital in the formation of corporations and banks that contributed to the development of the infrastructure of other states of the region. Eventually this small middle class was to contribute massively to the Palestinian armed struggle for the liberation of Palestine.

While the Palestinians were trying to heal the wounds resulting

from their expulsion by the Zionists, the dismemberment of their homeland, and their loss of national identity, the Arab states themselves were undertaking efforts to reshape their social, economic, and political systems. It will be recalled that the states which failed to stem the tide of Zionist occupation of Palestine underwent serious political revolutions. These revolutions in part radiated from the consequences of this failure. As new political initiatives were made in these states, the centrality of the Palestinian experience to the Arab world became more and more obvious. The Palestinians themselves contributed to this increased consciousness. Now dispersed among the Arab states and sharing with their citizens the fate of defeat and alerting them to the expansionist nature and racist character of Israel which the Palestinians had experienced first-hand in their day-to-day encounters with Zionist settlements, the Palestinians became active participants in the political processes of the Arab states. Although legally they were not citizens of some of these states, culturally, linguistically, morally, and historically they have always constituted an important component of the Arab national community. The increasing appeal of Arab national movements which viewed the reality of a fragmented Arab world as a legacy of imperialism enabled the Palestinians to participate in revisionist political movements. Their participation has reflected their national identity as Arabs and their strong conviction that the ultimate liberation of Palestine from Zionist control is linked directly to a transformed Arab national community, one committed to the same goal and capable of achieving it.

Within less than a decade after 1948, the Palestinians were in a position to play an important role in the politics of the Arab states. Some were citizens of these states, as in Jordan, which conferred Jordanian nationality on all Palestinians residing in central and eastern Palestine and in what used to be called Transjordan. Others were simply incorporated into national political movements within these states. And as more and more Palestinians, particularly the younger ones who had grown up in exile, became active and concerned politically, more specific attention was devoted to the liberation of Palestine itself.

Two factors should be understood at this point: (1) active Palestinian participation in revisionist political movements within each of the Arab states frequently placed Palestinians in direct political opposition to the regimes in power; and (2) the Palestinians' evaluation of the commitment of particular regimes to the liberation of Palestine made it inevitable for them to support certain ones

against others and, in turn, to receive support and sustenance from these regimes. These factors made it possible for hostile regimes to undertake harsh measures against Palestinians, not as Palestinians, but as supporters of parties, movements, or regimes deemed antagonistic to those in control. Thus Palestinians in Jordan who actively promoted the ideology of President Nasser were severely punished by the Jordanian regime, not because they were Palestinians, but because they were identified with Egypt's Nasser. By the same token Palestinians were alleged to be a pressure group utilizable politically by one regime or another.

A confluence of elements made it almost inevitable for the Palestinians to begin to undertake specifically Palestinian initiatives toward the restoration of Palestinian sovereignty over their national homeland. First, in the late fifties Palestinian activists increasingly realized that the commitment of the Arab states to the liberation of Palestine was not absolute and, what is worse perhaps, when that commitment was absolute, there was a serious question concerning the ability of the Arab state in question to wage an effective war of national liberation against Israel. Second, the Palestinians retained an unwavering commitment to restoration of their sovereignty over their homeland. At no point did they acknowledge the legitimacy or the finality of Israel's existence at the expense of Palestine. Third, negative sanctions were imposed by Israel and the Arab states. Israel constantly raided Palestinian areas along the Jordanian and Egyptian-Israeli armistice lines, and some Arab states engaged in active political persecution of Palestinians. Fourth, obvious human obstacles are imposed on a people without nationality; for example, movement for the Palestinians was difficult if not impossible. Continued neglect by the international community, which, acting through the United Nations, failed to restore them to their homes despite U.N. resolutions to that effect, simply added insult to injury. Faced with these questions and inspired by the success of the formerly colonized who have resorted to armed struggle to liberate their homeland, the Palestinian activists began to group themselves around specifically Palestinian movements committed to the restoration of their national sovereignty over their national homeland.

The Palestine Liberation Organization

Palestinian national movements coalesced by May 1964 to convene the First Palestine National Council Meeting. The Council was attended by over 400 representatives of the dispersed Palestinian people. It promulgated the principle that the Palestinians were part

of the Arab national community, that the Palestinians were a distinct permanent national group entitled to independence. The Council committed the Palestinian people to the liberation of Palestine and further resolved to establish the Palestine Liberation Organization to represent and express the will of the Palestinian people, to assert their rights nationally, regionally, and internationally, and to mobilize them for the task of national liberation. Since then, the Council has undergone several reorganizations in terms of its composition, method of electing representatives, and functions. It should be understood that a council representing a dispersed community that is not entirely free to participate legally in determining its destiny or which might suffer egregiously if it chose to assert its identity has serious problems. It cannot act or include representatives in the way that normal polities do. Likewise it cannot have all the functions normally discharged by representative bodies. Yet the Palestine National Council today is the highest representative body which the Palestinians possess. It is the authoritative agency which promulgates national goals and policies. It elects an Executive Committee, which is equivalent to a government in ordinary states. At present the Council has about 150 members representing broad sectors of the Palestinian people; the Executive Committee has 15 members elected by the Council. So long as the Committee has the confidence of the Council, it carries its tasks. The Council meets once each year and may meet also for special reasons if it deems it necessary. The Committee is permanently in session.

The Palestine Liberation Organization is the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. It acquired that legitimacy first from its own people. While individual Palestinians outside the Arab world may occasionally differ, Palestinian associations, groups, and communities in the Arab world and the Israeli-occupied areas accept the formulation of their goals, the methods of achieving these goals, and the various edicts, rules, and regulations which the organization has issued as theirs. Briefly, the primary goal which has been accepted is that of the liberation of Palestine, which entails the restoration of Palestinian national sovereignty over the entire Palestinian national homeland. The ultimate goal of the Palestine Liberation Organization is to establish a unitary nonsectarian democratic state for all Palestinians, irrespective of creed, national origin, or language. The Organization believes that such goals will be attained only with a national struggle patterned after the wars of national liberation waged by the formerly colonized. In the conduct of that struggle the Palestine Liberation Organization has sought and obtained the

assistance of oppressed people throughout the world and further has obtained considerable support from established states that view Israel as an agent of the West in the Arab world. Thus the socialist system of power has supported the PLO; the Afro-Asian states have supported the Palestinian struggle; and African and Latin American movements of national liberation have supported the PLO as well. Considerable sectors of societies in the United States and Western Europe have also extended support to the Palestinians to the chagrin of their governments.

As a consequence of this broad international support and the active political campaigns of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the international community as it is legally organized in the United Nations conferred legitimacy on the Palestinian struggle as well as the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. In 1948 the United Nations first recognized the rights of the Palestinian people to repatriation (resolution 194), and almost every year thereafter the organization has reaffirmed that right. Beginning in 1969, as a direct consequence of both the armed struggle of the Palestinian people and the political support that the socialist system of power and the Afro-Asian and some Euro-American powers had given the PLO, the General Assembly recognized the status of the Palestinian people as a colonized people entitled to independence. Several U.N. resolutions affirmed the right of the Palestinian people to struggle by all means to attain independence. The culmination of steady recognition of the Palestinian struggle for independence and the legitimacy of the Palestine Liberation Organization as the representative of the Palestinian people came in October and November 1974 when the U.N. General Assembly invited the Palestine Liberation Organization to attend the twenty-ninth session and address it on the aspirations of the Palestinian people. Following the address delivered by Yasser Arafat, chairman of the PLO's Executive Committee, and the ensuing debate, the General Assembly passed two historic resolutions. One (3236) recognized the right of the Palestinian people to independence and sovereignty in Palestine. The other (3237) conferred full Observer Status on the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. Today no less than 105 states in the world recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole representative of the Palestinians.

Ultimate and Transitional Goals

Ever since the onset of the Palestinian-Zionist struggle in Palestine,

the Palestinian people have had the single goal of attaining independence for Palestine.⁴ They rejected British colonial control exercised between 1917 and 1948. They violently rejected British attempts to assist in the transformation of Palestine from a predominantly Arab land into a European Jewish national home. Despite their protests, strikes, and revolutions, the Palestinians were denied the right of independence and in 1948 were unsuccessful in resisting the establishment of Israel.

The objective reality of Palestine changed materially in the following two decades, and Israel succeeded in permanently altering the demographic ratio of the Palestinian population. But the Palestinians continued their struggle for an independent sovereign Palestine. In the past such a political entity would have reflected the demographic reality of Palestine and thus would have entailed the existence of a Palestinian Arab state. The new realities would entail something altogether different. In their attempt to recognize the existence of a large Jewish population, almost equal to the Arab (Moslem and Christian) population, the Palestinian movement of national liberation came forward with the program of a unitary nonsectarian democratic state on the basis of one man, one vote. Such a goal, if realized, would assure the survival of all individuals on the basis of equality, irrespective of religion or national origin.

Aware that such a program conflicts most seriously in principle and in vision with the Zionist premises entailing the establishment of a purely Jewish state for the Jewish people, and conscious of the fact that Israel exists on territory to which it has no legal title, most of which it militarily occupied in 1948 or later confiscated and expropriated, and fully aware of Israel's rejection of the Palestinians' right to return to their homes in Palestine, the Palestinians formulated their goal of ultimately liberating Palestine from a regime which they view as a settler-colonial regime. The Palestinians believe that armed struggle waged by the Palestinian people with the support of free people everywhere would dismantle such a regime. Thus the ultimate goal of the Palestinians is the establishment of a unitary nonsectarian democratic state for all those Muslims, Christians, and Jews who consider Palestine their homeland. The goal is articulated in these terms by the Palestine Liberation Organization, and there is

⁴A brief and clear analysis of the Palestinian struggle against Zionism and Israel is Walter Lehn's *Development of Palestinian Resistance*, published as Information Paper No. 14 by the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1974.

no organized Palestinian opinion that disagrees with this formulation.

The Palestinians believe that such a goal will be attained by armed struggle over a protracted period of time. Yet the needs of the moment and worldwide pressures for a certain degree of stability in the region introduce realities that may retard or enhance the long-range aims of the Palestinians. Furthermore, the reality of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the gradual Israeli success in integrating these areas as subordinate units of production in the Israeli economy, and the success of Israel in settling and occupying some of these areas combine to pressure the Palestinians to address themselves to the immediate need of rescuing these areas from occupation and possible incorporation into Israel. Thus the transitional program of the Palestine Liberation Organization adopted by the Palestine National Council in 1974 addressed itself to this question. It is now quite clear that the Palestine Liberation Organization attaches a great deal of importance to the liberation of any part of the Palestinian national homeland, and that when any part of that homeland is unconditionally liberated from Israeli occupation, the Palestine Liberation Organization will establish a national authority to exercise jurisdiction thereon. Thus the immediate (or transitional) task which the Palestine Liberation Organization has set for itself is the establishment of such a national authority in any part of Palestine which is to be wrested from Israeli control. The Palestine Liberation Organization believes that the transitional task is a stage along the path of total national liberation of Palestine. All Palestinian organizations actively engaged in the national liberation movement have adhered to this program. Palestinians in the occupied areas manifested their support to the PLO through strikes and demonstrations. It is presumed that Palestinians in Jordan are equally supportive but are unable to express that support publicly in the light of their tragic experience of 1970.

American Policy and the Palestinians

Three phases characterize American policy toward the Palestinians. The first phase, preceding the dismemberment of Palestine, showed congressional and executive support for the aspirations of the Zionists. As dismemberment approached, American diplomatic observers on the scene alerted policymakers to the dangerous implication of American support for Zionism. It is to the credit of these diplomatic representatives that they perceived quite clearly the consequences of the establishment of a Zionist state. Their realistic

perception, as the Middle East verged on revolution in 1948, led them to appeal for an American policy that would be fair to the Palestinians, a policy less committed to the Zionist program of disinheriting the Palestinians and one sensitive to the Arab implications of the Palestinian struggle. Official American support of Zionism and Israel is proverbial and derives from a complex of factors. In the years to come American policy continued to reap the harvest of its partiality as policymakers disregarded the wise counsel of American diplomats in the Middle East.

The second phase of American policy toward the Palestinians witnessed total support—financial, moral, and legal—to Israel matched by a corresponding “benign neglect” of the Palestinians. While some financial assistance to the Palestinian refugees was channeled through the budget of UNRWA, those efforts made by the U.S. government were directed toward the promotion of various schemes that would ultimately settle Palestinians in areas outside Palestine. As would be expected, this policy failed to produce whatever design the U.S. government might have conceived for the region.

The third phase of American policy came in the wake of the rise of the Palestinian armed struggle subsequent to the defeat of the Arab states in 1967. As the Palestinian national liberation movement, allied to the liberation movements of the Third World, succeeded in exposing Israel as a settler-colonial regime, the United States adopted a policy of total confrontation to bring about the military and political defeat of the Palestinians. The United States provided Israel with military, economic, and diplomatic support in its conquest of Palestinian territory. Further, the United States assisted regimes deemed particularly threatened by the Palestinian movement, such as Jordan.

Internationally, the United States mounted a massive publicity campaign against the Palestinians. This policy of total hostility to the Palestinians, regionally and internationally, seems to be an expression of an American policy tied completely to Israel. It has isolated the United States, as Israel has been increasingly isolated in the international arena. Following 1969, on every question affecting the rights and aspirations of the Palestinians, the United States found itself in a minority of five or six allies of Israel in U.N. voting. Between 1969 and 1974 the United States frequently found itself on the same side as Costa Rica, the former regime of Portugal, South Africa, Israel, and an occasional Bolivia or Dominican Republic. The majority of other states in the world found no difficulty in

supporting the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination and independence. The overall objective of this inflexibly hostile policy seems to be to bring about the capitulation of the Palestinian people to Zionist premises and/or control. The U.S.-Israel Memorandum of Agreement of September 1975, in which the United States committed itself to continue to refuse to recognize or negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization so long as the latter rejects Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 among others, is an explicit invitation to the Palestinian people to accept their definition as "refugees" and to accept their national extinction.

The historical record of the Middle East suggests quite clearly that an American policy wedded to Zionist premises, oversensitive to Israeli aspirations and needs, and betraying total neglect, national denigration, and hostility to the Palestinians is counterproductive to peace, stability, and good relations between the Arab and the American peoples. Such a policy has already contributed to the eruption of conflict several times. Continuation of such a policy, already indicated by the memorandum of agreement with Israel, is blind to the centrality of the Palestinians to the Arab-Israeli conflict and totally rejects their aspirations and internationally sanctioned rights. It will undoubtedly lead to further instability. The time has come for the United States to adopt and pursue a policy that is more in harmony with the international community. As a beginning, such a policy ought to accept the United Nations resolutions of November 1974 and recognize that the Palestinians are an essential element to peace in the Middle East. Dr. Kissinger's statement before the General Assembly in which he reiterated the concern of the United States for the "interests" of the Palestinians and American initiatives for interim or final agreements disregarding the national rights of the Palestinians signifies an American commitment to an enduring conflict in the Middle East.

Edward W. Said

THE PALESTINIANS AND AMERICAN POLICY

The simplest and, I think, the least accurate description of the Palestinians today is that they are simply refugees who are either a passive nuisance—they sit uselessly in camps, they live on international charity—or an active bother—they are terrorists, they start civil wars in Jordan and Lebanon. As Professor Abu-Lughod has testified, they are neither of those things. There is no doubt of course that for one reason or another today in the Middle East the Palestinians are an adversary group; even though every Arab will recognize in the Arab Palestinian a brother, he will also recognize that the Palestinian today stands for principled opposition to injustice, to oppression, to alienation more directly and more wholeheartedly than any other national group in the Middle East. As such, I believe, the Palestinian is a positive, progressive challenge to any state policy that denies human rights, in both the simple and the complex senses of that phrase, to any individual or group of individuals. The courage it takes to exert such political and moral pressure is considerable: in itself this is enough to invite attention to the Palestinian, especially since in this country one has the impression that his positive existence is something deliberately ignored. Let us briefly review the history of Palestinian opposition as it developed principally, but perhaps not exclusively, in the school of Israeli hard knocks. Later we will examine how such a history has placed the Palestinians prominently today, as a people with a

decisive, beneficial role to play in the Middle East and in the world at large.

Imagine, first of all, that by some malicious irony you have found yourselves declared foreigners in your own country. This is the essence of the Palestinians' fate during the twentieth century. For some of the early Zionists the resident Arabs of Palestine were not worth taking into account, even though up to and through 1948 these same Arabs owned more than 94 percent of the land of Palestine. At best the Arabs were mere natives. Some well-intentioned Zionist liberals were to discover that Arabs actually existed, just as today some Americans have discovered that the Indians existed or, to cite a more recent example, that the inhabitants of Diego Garcia exist. Nevertheless, in the interest of higher principles, which got higher and higher and left the Arabs out altogether, Palestine ceased to exist at all. As a consequence the Arab Palestinian either was compelled to leave or—and this is so little taken account of in the United States as to shame any decent-minded American lover of justice and other American ideals—became a legislated nonperson. By that I mean quite simply that the moment Israel existed as a state entity it was declared a state for Jews only. In practice this meant two things: (1) that unlimited immigration into Palestine was automatically granted only to every Jew anywhere, and (2) that only Jews were to benefit from the institutions, laws, policies of the state, which were Jewish, and that was that. It is no exaggeration to say that modern history acknowledges no other transformation of human beings so swiftly from natives into nonentities—while even a fairly large number of them remained where they were. Now when it is said officially by Israelis that Israel is as Jewish as England is English or France is French, and this is one of the things that makes Israel democratic, you must remember that there are hundreds of thousands of Arabs in Israel, and millions more under occupation or in exile. What is their role in democracy but as a miscellaneous third-class population, and, more basically, what is their presence but, according to Israel, an official absence?

You will say, no doubt, that I have reduced Israeli and Palestinian history too much, that I have made it abstract and a matter of principle. And that I have made no mention of Jewish suffering through the ages, nor of Israel as a solution to the Jewish problem, nor of positive contributions made by Israel to world order. Precisely; I have not made mention of these things and have been abstract for some fairly fundamental and evident reasons. If there is such a thing as a Palestinian today, and there is, it is because these

principles and these abstractions that I have mentioned have for him meant some extremely concrete and oppressive things. He cannot be asked to admit as virtues the very things that have made him objectively wretched: after all, no one concedes easily to being a necessary evil. When and if he had been asked to receive the Jew in Palestine as an oppressed brother seeking asylum in Palestine, asylum and equal rights, his response was and would have been, yes, on that basis we welcome Jews as people with ancestral ties to this part of the world and as fighters with us against injustice, persecution, and inhumanity. But in fact the predominant Israeli attitude to him has been not as a coeval in injustice and suffering but rather as a master overlord come to chase a local or a colored out of his land, thereafter to put him in his proper place. By what other than a purely arbitrary, abstract, and inhuman law can it be declared, for example, that a Jew born in Warsaw, Vienna, or Cleveland has a right to live in Palestine, while a Palestinian born there, whose family worked the land for immemorial generations, has no right either to return to it after being made to leave it, or to remain on it as a full citizen before the law? The Israeli Law of Return declares this, and, while it may make some sense to a Jew, it cannot make complete sense to him, either as a believer in democracy or as a sufferer from exactly this kind of law throughout history. Similarly, what else is it but a brutal application of inhuman logic to erase, literally, over 380 of the original 490 Arab villages of Palestine, or to confiscate Arab lands, or to jail innumerable Arabs for protesting and resisting unjust laws against them, or to deport, exile, murder, and use the weapons of war, demagoguery, and propaganda against the remnant of a people that one has effectively silenced and unilaterally declared nonexistent simply because, against their oppressors, they say *we exist?*

It is not unexpected for Palestinians to have resisted the wrongs done them, and the wrongs continually being done them, as they have. What is unexpected is that their struggle has been understood to a great extent in the West as an anti-Semitic one. It is in fact no such thing, but rather an anticolonialist, anti-injustice struggle for independence. Their greatest sin in Western eyes is that as Palestinians they are non-Western, non-white, underdeveloped. And certainly this has been the Israeli attitude toward them. Examine the Emergency Defense Regulations adopted by the Israelis from the British mandatory authorities in Palestine and you will see a dramatic instance of one colonial administration taking over from another in Palestine. Same natives, different white man. From the beginning of colonialist settlement in Palestine, the Arab Palestinian has

consistently seen the foreign settler primarily as a *foreign* settler, not primarily as a Britisher or a Jew. He opposed the Britisher for what he did, not for what his color was; similarly he opposed the Jew because he came from the United States, Poland, or France as a foreigner to take over land that was not his, not because he was a Jew. Moreover what the Palestinian has resisted specifically in Israeli colonialism has been the exclusivist vision of Middle East society, by which ethnic chauvinism is seen as the rule of the day, separating men into intensely divisive clans based not on true human community but on the domination of society by blood and religion and, in the end, superstition.

Perhaps also it is not unexpected that the costs, to Arab and Jew alike in Palestine, of such struggle have been noticed and high. Indeed there is another sort of irony here, that the Palestinian and the Jew will be remembered, in a Palestine whose history is very long and very bloody, as the opponents whose struggle was especially senseless and especially mindless. Any observer today is likely to be impatient with Arabs and Jews as people who will not settle down and end their quarrel. However, a close study of what has happened in Palestine in particular will indicate that the Arab Palestinian has waged his struggle with a peaceful and harmonious end in view. During the early days, the twenties, thirties, and forties, Palestinian Arabs mobilized correctly around opposition to Zionist and British colonialism. What they did was scarcely unusual. They stood against any foreign attempt to turn their land into a new homeland for someone else. Here and there amongst progressive Arabs a still more courageous vision articulated itself even during those early days. In time this was the vision that prevailed, and most Palestinians and other Arabs endorse it completely. They came to see that if any peace was ever to come in Palestine or elsewhere it could only come, not as a result of legislated indifference to some of the people, but as a result of active justice for all of the people, Jew, Christian, and Muslim.

This is a very relevant point to be made during the seventies. For the Middle East, like the United States, is made up of numerous societies and subcultures, communities all of which aspire to a greater and greater human integration even though eccentric tendencies draw them away from harmony with each other. Anyone who says that the Middle East can be divided neatly into Arabs and Jews is a simple-minded liar. The truth of the matter, as, I believe, Palestinians were the first to realize, is that the Middle East can never be united politically or made peacefully to accommodate all its

component peoples on any other but an egalitarian, secular, and truly just basis. There can be no real peace if one people urges itself over another as more historically justified to be a dominant or usurping society; the same is equally true of one religion, one race, one ethnic heritage. Indeed we can go so far as to say that any time one religious, ethnic, or racial community demands and wins a decisive share of political power mainly on the claim that such a community has a foreordained right to that power, the result is calamitous. The Arabs of Palestine discovered this truth at very great expense. Instead of living in a society making no distinction between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, they are the victims of a movement declaring Christian and Muslim Arabs to be less equal than Jews. Zionism has placed sheer mysticism and sheer force above libertarian ideas. And Israel has paid no less a price than the Palestinians. Perpetually at war, torn by internal strife, standing before the Arab with virtually nothing to offer as a vision of the future except more dissension, more injustice, more expensive militarism, Israel cannot be an answer to the huge social, economic, and political ills afflicting the entire Middle East.

Every Arab Palestinian can be proud that out of his people's travail has come a vision putting an end to racial or religious or political persecution. But this vision is no fantasy. For it takes into account the reality of Jews, the reality of Muslims, Christians, and many other communities existing at present in the Middle East. Of course the range of Palestinian thinking on this question of the future is necessarily constrained by real pressures in the present: after all, it does not go without saying that there will be a Palestinian people or Palestinian organizations around if the determined action against them continues indefinitely. But what no one minimizes, on the other hand, is the power of a great and liberating idea, and for this the Palestinians have maximum respect, not simply because it is their idea, but more generously because they see in it an idea drawing on the best, the widest impulses in Middle Eastern history, culture, and society. I think the idea has been planted everywhere now. It exists at the United Nations, in the form of numerous resolutions validating the rights of all communities with a legitimate interest in Palestine. It exists among a small but ever growing group of Israeli Jews, and among a larger group of Jews everywhere. It is finding positive responses in progressive and humane minds all over the world. The idea is that Palestine is the home of the Palestinians, Muslim, Jewish, Christian; out of a struggle to achieve this realization will come justice and humanity of a sort not found there at present.

This is a vision of the future offered by the Palestinian today. Still, we cannot ignore the presence of other conflicting visions; we must also acknowledge the existence of many obstacles. It is by no means clear to everyone, for example, that Israelis will ever be willing to accept the view of the future I have just been calling Palestinian. Direct opposition to Zionism, declared and undeclared war between Palestinians and Israelis breed a dialectic of terror and violence all their own. Some Palestinians see the way to the future as requiring first the passage of much time, much political activity, much patience, and much subtle confidence. Others see the future blocked by a series of oppressive barriers which can only be removed if a total revolution takes place. Most Palestinians today, I suspect, see the future as a mixture of these two processes, as the result of a long political and revolutionary dialectic.

But, and here I come to the most urgent part of my statement, every Palestinian, with no exception that I can think of, regards the politics and the attitudes of the United States in the Middle East as profoundly unsatisfactory. Consider what there is to be seen. First, there is the United States of seemingly unqualified military, economic, and political aid to Israel. Then there is the United States of military, economic, and political aid to Arab governments, the support of which is not always in the interest of the people. Then there is the United States of step-by-step management, of undoubtedly intervention in the daily lives of foreign and domestic citizens, of surreptitious secrecy when human lives are in the balance, of conspiratorial silence when open debate is necessary. Then there is the United States of Vietnam paradoxically yoked to a history and culture that has stood during the two hundred years of its republican history for high ideas about human nature and destiny. Finally, and most painfully for the Palestinian, there is the United States of total disobligation toward, of total disregard in every possible way for, the Palestinian as a real element in the Middle East today. If you put all these conflicting United States' together, you will certainly be confused at first, but you will also definitely be angry. To the Palestinian therefore the United States represents neither a coherent set of values nor even a policy. The United States has become a catch-all for Middle Eastern afflictions, and, we must add, it seems determined to limit its activity accordingly.

There is no doubt in any Palestinian's mind that a U.S. Middle Eastern attitude—for it is scarcely a policy—based on (1) an indiscriminate military and political support of everything that is humanly repressive in the region and (2) a total official ignorance of

what the root political, social, and human problems of the region are, is a disaster. Nor is there any doubt that such an attitude must be opposed, not only for the sake of self-interest but also because it cannot possibly be in anyone's real short-, medium- or long-term interest to maintain such a pair of antihuman principles in lieu of a policy. Every latest pronouncement by some member of the current administration makes it more and more apparent that the U.S. has only negative knowledge of the Palestinians. Aside from seeming to promote ignorance, which as a teacher I find reprehensible on all possible grounds, the United States actively promotes hostility toward a human community whose only offense historically seems to have been that it exists in Palestine. Every public and official statement about the Middle East bends over backward to avoid exactly what it is that Arabs and Israelis have been fighting about for almost sixty uninterrupted years. Is such a grand gesture of systematic obstinacy on the part of a government something to be helplessly acquiesced in, hysterically lamented, or blindly attacked? Often I don't know, since rationality itself seems the last thing to be regarded these days.

Nevertheless I have taken this Committee's invitation seriously. I have tried as much as possible to present a picture of the Palestinian reality now, as well as of the Palestinian community's sense not just of itself but of its history, its opponents, its allies. But before proposing before this Committee a set of modifications that I would like to see made in American policy, let me outline what seems to me to be the present framework of consensus within which Palestinians actually operate. No one assumes at all that Israel will either immediately pack up and go away or, and this is more important, that it will seriously reconsider its policy toward the Palestinians as a whole, toward occupied Palestinians (those within pre-1967 Israel as well as those in the former West Bank), or toward organized Palestinians (namely, the PLO). It is likely, although far from certain, that Israel will try to promote a quasi-indigenous Palestinian leadership and authority from out of the populations it now controls; this can be done either with or without the help of the Jordanian regime. But that is all that we can expect from Israel, since it is perfectly evident that Israeli policy toward the Arabs as a whole is premised on an eventual semi-detente with the larger Arab confrontation and nonconfrontation states, and a continued disregard—except, as I said, for cosmetic changes in that disregard—of the Palestinian people as a serious political force in the region. Every statement made by the Israeli leadership for the past eight years

corroborates this; every policy accentuates it. No withdrawal; no Palestinians; no changes. The immediate Palestinian priority is therefore to gain some political presence in Palestine that establishes a foothold there of Palestinian national and political authority. Let me put this differently. Palestinians need immediately to put an end to their state of dispersion and rootless exile; for this, therefore, Israel must at least begin to acknowledge the Palestinian actuality.

Because of the realities that I sketched for you it is of course improbable that the Palestinians will suddenly become everyone's hope for peace. Ironically, however, everyone knows that there can be no peace so long as the Palestinians are not fully involved in the making of peace, fully involved as a main party to the peace. What are the resistances to the Palestinians? One is inertia. Another is Israeli-American reluctance to recognize an element in the Middle East that the policy of one state, Israel, cannot tolerate nor the policy of another, the United States, reckon with. Moreover there are good reasons for Palestinians to believe that other Arab regimes do not welcome a Palestinian presence. For although it is a fact that were it not for the Arab countries there would be very little today that we could call Palestinian, it is also true that the Palestinians, despite their comparative lack of military strength, represent political, moral, and social principles that stir—even upset—the consciences of all other Arabs, that make it likely for other Arabs to make similar demands for more social justice, more human rights, more political participation elsewhere in the Middle East. The same is exactly true for the Palestinian effect on the Israelis, since the inequities of social justice in Israel are felt by so-called Oriental Jews as much as they are by Arabs. Thus we find that the Palestinians plus most of the peoples of the area are allied on the side of a true peace with justice, with alienation and usurpation ended; what they face on the other side is a consortium of powers, great and small, whose interest appears to be that short-run, profitable "peace" is the best and only thing possible.

This Committee does not need to be reminded that the political and economic stakes in the Middle East are very high indeed. Yet what is worth insisting on is that no peace, step-by-step or all at once, which renounces a major component of human wealth in the region is worth having. What I am saying is not a matter about which one should be either warning or complacent. It is simply that human nature will not for long tolerate insults to its actualities and its presence, and the Palestinians are humans; this means that their struggle is as just and as worth sacrificing for as any other struggle

against tyranny. This must be considered. It is no less true of the other Arabs and, in the long run, of the Israelis in the Middle East.

The United States has acquired, for better or for worse, an advantageous position as a great power in the Middle East, especially since the 1973 war. I see no advantage to anyone in its tactic of pouring in unlimited quantities of military hardware, from Pershing missiles to Cobra helicopters to Phantom jets, no advantage at all. Nor is it admirable to promote disengagements that commit (sometimes secretly) all the parties, including the United States, to further military entanglement even as it is clear that, in the case of the Arabs, national priorities are circumvented. Nor is there much sense in pretending that over three million Palestinians do not exist. Nor is there wisdom in conceiving of Middle Eastern politics as a kind of sucker's game in which only the clever schemer can possibly win. Nor, finally, is there cleverness in conducting politics there as a wholly cynical affair in which one pretends official ignorance while promoting studied antagonism toward the Palestinians.

With its enormous leverage both with Israel and the other Arabs, the United States is in a position to encourage serious consideration of the Palestinians. No one has any illusions that this can be done with some simple, immediate end, like recognition of the PLO, in view. What needs to be done is what, since March 1975, the Administration has been claiming to do, namely, conducting a re-assessment. More attention must be paid, for example, to the *values* that have moved Palestinian men and women to struggle. Less attention needs to be paid to mere military expediency and short-term gain. That much is clear. I would advise a serious concern with the fact that since the early years of this century the Middle East has been undergoing the most complex and intense of modern revolutions; this revolution is not something to be opposed out of ignorance, but something to be supported intelligently. It is, after all is said and done, a movement in search of exactly the goals and realized ideals that stirred the fathers of the American republic. As policymakers you must ask why in the Middle East the United States has, with a few exceptions, always found itself allied wrongly *against* values and *with* the reverse of values. What is a policy that enhances Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza but that?

Most Palestinians would consider some form of Palestinian sovereignty on the West Bank and Gaza as a minimum medium-run political goal. There is no other alternative that can be formulated concretely for them at present, since exile and political nonentity define their status for the moment. The PLO as such is an

inescapable fact of politics today, and whether the United States recognizes that officially or not is more a reflection on the United States than it is on the PLO. I would advise against any direct U.S. intervention in the affairs of the Middle East. Rather I would recommend that the United States promote free discussion about the Palestinians at home and abroad; what is most important, I think, is that the United States should modify its policy sufficiently to take in what actually goes on in the Middle East, instead of what never ought to have gone on. There are any number of myths bogging down action and thought. These mirages ought to be dissipated. No one has been better at this than the Palestinians, and, as I have been trying to show, they prove this daily. If involved in the process of peace they will bring political ideas and values where these are lacking (and they are lacking in today's peace process, such as it is). If the Palestinians are not involved, *peace* as a word will lack true meaning in the Middle East and, what is worse, peace as an actuality cannot be achieved.

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